

## Taking Stock of Our National Historic Landmarks

**The most honored places from the nation's past—National Historic Landmarks—are preserved for their exceptional value as tangible elements of the American narrative. The National Park Service, which monitors these treasures, recently issued an update on their condition. The assessment concludes that most have kept their integrity and are well cared-for. Much-needed funding from the NPS-administered Save America's Treasures initiative and similar efforts have gone a long way to make this possible, a trend that will have to continue if our landmarks are to be preserved.**

Ninety-five percent of the country's 2,342 NHLs are in good condition, up from 94 percent three years ago. Deterioration and development continue to be the main threats but, for the most part, the effort to save these places has been a success.

More than half of the landmarks are privately owned. State and local jurisdictions administer 22 percent, tribes less than 1 percent, and the Federal Government 13 percent. Over half are open to the public.

In monitoring NHLs, the National Park Service ranks them on a scale ranging from satisfactory to lost. Within that spectrum are "watched" (impending threat), "threatened" (imminent threat or severely damaged), and "emergency" (catastrophic damage requiring immediate action). Each year, the condition of some NHLs improves while others worsen. Today, 107 landmarks are considered threatened while 291 are on the watch list.

Overall, the number of threatened landmarks has dropped by 30 in the last two years. Many have been upgraded to watched status. Though the number in good condition rose by only 1 percent since the last update, this is considered positive because there had been virtually no upward movement in this category over the past twelve years.

The main threat to historic landmarks, regardless of who owns them or where they are located, is deterioration. In historic districts, demolition and inappropriate alterations are the prevalent threats. Battlefields and archeological sites suffer from development, agriculture, erosion, and looting.

One landmark has recently been lost and another will soon be gone. Resurrection Manor, a 17th century farmhouse in Maryland, was bulldozed for new development. A rocket engine test facility in Cleveland—designated an NHL as part of a National Park Service study on historic properties related to space exploration—is to be demolished to expand an airport.

Recent funding initiatives have brightened the future of our landmarks. Since 1999, Congress has provided \$30 million annually in Save America's Treasures grant matching funds. This money has benefited, among others, the ancient cliff dwellings of Colorado's Mesa Verde National Park and Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater in Pennsylvania. The National Park Service's Challenge Cost Share grant program has also played a large role.

The National Park Service identifies potential NHLs, and works with those who own or manage them. It also collaborates with States, tribes, and nonprofit groups such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The agency provides preservation training, technical assistance, and consultation. The National Park Service also offers classroom-ready lesson plans and travel itineraries on the web that feature NHLs.

For more information about the NHL program, grants, or individual landmarks, visit [www.cr.nps.gov/nhl](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nhl).

RECENT FUNDING INITIATIVES HAVE BRIGHTENED THE FUTURE OF OUR LANDMARKS. SINCE 1999, SAVE AMERICA'S TREASURES GRANTS HAVE SUPPLIED \$30 MILLION ANNUALLY IN MATCHING FUNDS.



B&O RAILROAD MUSEUM

Damaged 

Condition Improving 

B&O RAILROAD MUSEUM, BALTIMORE, WHOSE ROOF COLLAPSED UNDER SNOW THIS WINTER

Number of landmarks removed from the threatened list in the last two years:

30

Number of landmarks still at risk:

107



FORT DAVIS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



FORT DAVIS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, IN TEXAS, WHICH RECEIVED A SAVE AMERICA'S TREASURES GRANT



OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY



HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPH OF OHIO'S JOHN PARKER HOUSE, A STOP ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD THAT IS BEING RESTORED

# Battle Worn

## Battlefield Study Looks at American Revolution, War of 1812

Few people passing through the gritty industrial setting of Chalmette, Louisiana, would guess they are at the site of the famous Battle of New Orleans. Ships glide past oil refineries and into a slip on the Mississippi River, their crews unaware they are docking at Andrew Jackson's headquarters. What has become of the places where early American history was decided? The National Park Service has spent the past three years looking for an answer, searching out battlefields and other properties associated with the American Revolution and the War of 1812.

Authorized by Congress in 1996, the research is an attempt to address the threat posed by development and explore ways in which these places can be preserved. In the case of the War of 1812, the study has provided much-needed information on an event that is little-commemorated. "It is indeed one of the forgotten wars," says National Park Service historian David Lowe.

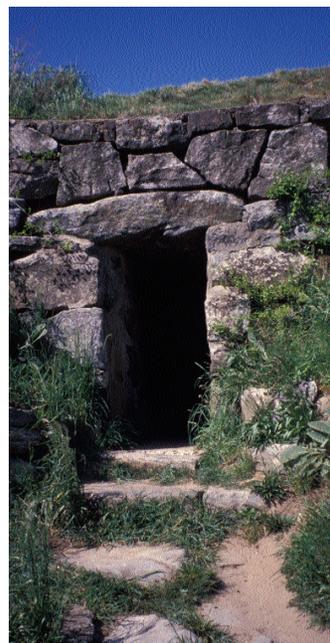
Members of the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program—and its Cultural Resources Geographic Information Systems Unit—form the team leading the study. Working with a list of 811 sites approved by a blue ribbon panel of scholars and other experts, the program's staff trained State and local preservation officials in the use of global positioning systems to survey their jurisdictions. Using hand-held GPS units, they looked for clues that might indicate a battlefield, encampment, or other site associated with the wars. Historic maps and other documents assured surveyors that site boundaries were sound. The study also documented local planning decisions.

The focus is divided between battlefields and properties with a connection to the wars, such as buildings, archeological sites, or landscapes. Though still preliminary, the findings are elucidating. "Fragmented" is probably the best word to describe the 220 battlefields analyzed. Cut up by modern land use, only about 16 percent survive intact. These, along with an additional 10 percent moderately compromised by development, have potential for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Of 518 associated properties, 46 percent retain enough integrity to be considered.

The National Park Service developed a database in which surveyors enter information directly. The database could be "something of a gold mine to researchers in the future," says Lowe.

Data from the surveys has allowed researchers to produce overlay maps. When the boundaries of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 sites are superimposed over the maps, it shows their current residential, industrial, or agricultural use—giving a picture of their integrity. This information helps local preservationists develop ways to protect them.

Based on information gathered in the surveys, recommendations will be made to the National Park Service and the Secretary of the Interior on how to preserve these vanishing landscapes for early America.



ABOVE: OLD FORT NIAGARA STATE HISTORIC SITE. MIDDLE AND BOTTOM: FORT GRISWOLD STATE PARK

**Opposite top:** Old Fort Niagara in New York. **Middle and bottom:** Fort Griswold, from Revolution-era Connecticut. **Below:** Kentucky's Bourbon Iron Works furnace, reputed source of cannonballs for the Battle of New Orleans.



BOURBON IRON WORKS

#### TEACHING HISTORY GRANTS

Applications for \$100 million in Teaching American History grants are available this spring from the U.S. Department of Education. The funds support local programs that actively engage students in understanding American history. To get a grant, schools or school districts must work with a partner such as a college, museum, or park.

One of last year's grant recipients, receiving \$1 million over three years, is Weaving the Fabric of American History, a consortium of six school districts, five national parks, one state park, the College of William & Mary, and the Organization of American Historians.

This summer teachers from each district and park—as part of a three credit graduate course—will work together in the parks and at the college on lesson plans and other ways to bring history alive for students. Thanks to the OAH, they will also join in discussions with leading historians.

Direct questions about the Weaving the Fabric of American History project to Heather Huyck, the National Park Service's northeast regional chief historian at [Heather\\_Huyck@nps.gov](mailto:Heather_Huyck@nps.gov).

Grant details are on the U.S. Department of Education website at [www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/TAH/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/TAH/index.html).

# People of the Thick Fir Woods

## Research Traces Connection Between Tribes and Voyageurs National Park

The people of the thick fir woods, as they were known, lived for centuries along the chain of lakes in what is today Voyageurs National Park. The Chippewa's removal from their traditional lands, in many respects, the familiar story of westward expansion in the 19th century. But during short excursions into the forests around Minnesota's lake country, National Park Service archaeologist Jeffrey Richner saw a different picture.

Though the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa were ostensibly moved to a reservation, many continued to practice their traditional way of life on park land well into the 20th century. As late as 1893, an Anglo canoeist noted the "Indian Wigwams" that he passed along the way. At about the same time, an agent with the Bureau of Indian Affairs observed that the reservation's log cabins were largely unoccupied.

For 16 years, Richner, park cultural resource specialist Mary Graves, and archaeologists from the National Park Service's Midwest Archeological Center have assembled this lost history from a host of sources, synthesizing information gained through routine activity: site inventory, maintenance, campsite management, and so on. "No one piece tells a lot—just little snips here and there," says Richner. Mary Graves complemented the effort with exhaustive research into the historical record. The result earned a nomination for a recent John Cotter Award for Excellence in National Park Service Archeology.

Interest in the region's fur, timber, and minerals prompted the Bois Forte's gradual displacement. But in spite of increasing pressure many remained in the park until at least 1920, living in wigwams and log homes, fishing, hunting, and following their traditional practices.

Archaeological sites within Voyageurs yielded evidence of the Bois Forte's presence—buttons, coins, dishware, and glass items. Structural remains are abundant, as are what appear to be grave sites.

Census records, newspaper accounts, oral histories, and photographs helped trace these Native Americans through time. An entry in the Rainy Lake Journal from 1895 gives an example: "The Indians have moved out of their log houses in the woods and reestablished themselves in bark wigwams on Sha Point." Ernest Brown, a local taxidermist, describes the Indians' dancing, gathering wild rice, and making birch bark canoes.

Annuity payments—treaty compensation to the Bois Forte for the ceded land—show what Richner calls the "striking continuity" of the group through time. Records of homestead applications and off-reservation allotments clearly link individuals to tracts within the park.

The 1930s and 1940s saw an end to the Bois Forte's living in Voyageurs. Resort developers had discovered the lake country, and stresses on the environment made it difficult to grow rice, one of the tribes' staples. According to Richner, the subject remains rich with opportunities for future research.



**Above, left, and right: Historic photographs of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa.** ALL PHOTOS VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK



NATIONAL ARCHIVES



## Gathering Recollections

### National Park Service Collects Oral Histories of Tuskegee Crews

Though one of WWII's most stirring episodes, the story of the African American fighter group that defied the odds with a formidable combat record in the skies over Europe remains unknown to many. The Tuskegee Airmen experience was pivotal in the integration of African Americans into the armed forces and a long step in the progression toward civil rights.

In 1998, the National Park Service acquired Moton Field in Tuskegee, Alabama, where the pilots trained. Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site is in its formative stages. Its richest offering will no doubt come from the oral histories of people who were actually there, now in the works.

The project began in August 2000 with a nationwide search for former pilots, mechanics, parachute packers, and others. According to Todd Moyer, the National Park Service historian in charge, "We're trying to get the most complete story we can . . . It's incredibly rich."

The military assembled the first class of pilots in 1941, who emerged separate from their white counterparts to face a military establishment skeptical of their ability. However, the Tuskegee Airmen destroyed over 200 German aircraft and earned a multitude of decorations.

The National Park Service has solicited the help of Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.—a group of former flyers who can put researchers in touch with other Tuskegee personnel—which is critical. "This is literally a race against time," Moyer says. Of the 15,000 people with a connection to the Tuskegee Airmen, an estimated 2-3,000 are still alive. Many of the pilots came from other parts of the country (some grew up among New York's African American elite) and were not prepared for the kind of discrimination they faced.

The oral histories will be a major part of the park's interpretive program. Recordings and transcripts will be available to the public. For more on this story visit the National Park Service web feature, "Legends of Tuskegee," at [www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee](http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee).



## Learning from History

### 100th Lesson Plan Commemorates Supreme Court Ruling on School Integration

Teaching with Historic Places, the National Park Service's award-winning education program, made a significant milestone in February with the release of its 100th online lesson plan, "New Kent School and the George W. Watkins School: From Freedom of Choice to Integration," in observance of African American History Month.

The lesson features two Virginia schools that were the subject of the 1968 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County, Virginia*. Coming 14 years after *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled that separate schools for blacks and whites were inherently unequal, the *Green* decision placed an affirmative duty on school boards to integrate schools. The lesson plan helps students explore the *Green* decision and introduces them to those responsible for integrating the public schools of New Kent County.

"The places of America's history are found in national parks and turn-of-the-century industrial districts, in battlefields and school houses—like these in New Kent County," explained National Park Service Director Fran Mainella in announcing the lesson plan. "Whether in a neighborhood or a national park, these places tell stories of struggle and success. They are part of a seamless system of tangible connections to our past. In a world where 'reality' is increasingly virtual, these places are real. They are authentic. They capture our imagination, which in the classroom can be the key to unlocking a student's interest."

Understanding the magic of the actual places where history happened, in 1991 the staff of the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places began working with teachers to incorporate place-based learning into the classroom. The lessons are used to prepare students for field trips and, even more frequently, to help classes explore places they may never visit. "The value of using historic places to teach history, even though you're not there at the site, is that they help to bring history alive in a very, very, specific and unique context," said Jim Peroco, a teacher at West Springfield High School in Springfield, Virginia.

The lesson plans and the learning experiences they shape are tightly focused on places drawn exclusively from the more than 76,000 listings in the National Register of Historic Places. With the support of the New Kent County School Board, the two Virginia schools were designated National Historic Landmarks—and concurrently added to the National Register—by Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton on August 7, 2001.

Another trademark of the lessons is that they are designed to be organic. The Teaching with Historic Places program provides tools, guidance, and encouragement to national and State park interpreters, teachers, professors, preservationists, and others to write lesson plans based on local resources. Lessons are often edited and published online by National Register staff.

In the case of the New Kent County schools, an impressive array of partners came together to create the lesson plan. Three Ph.D. candidates at the College of William & Mary—Jody Allen, Brian Daugherty, and Sarah Trembanis—researched and wrote the lesson,



**Left and right: George W. Watkins School, in New Kent County, Virginia. Middle: New Kent County School.**

with assistance from Frances Davis, Na’ Dana Smith, and Megan Walsh, members of the class of 2002 at New Kent High School. To fund the students’ work, the College of William & Mary, the New Kent County School Board, the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (a continuing partner), and the National Park Service jointly applied for a grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy’s African-American Heritage Program.

The lesson plans rely on the historian’s fundamental tool—primary sources. In “New Kent School and the George W. Watkins School: From Freedom of Choice to Integration,” students are asked to analyze photographs from the school’s yearbooks, a map of the county, excerpts from the 1968 decision, and interviews with key participants in the case, including Dr. Calvin Green, who brought the suit decided by the Supreme Court.

Lesson plans also suggest activities to help students apply what they have learned. In the New Kent County lesson plan, students are encouraged to conduct an interview with someone familiar with the debates over school desegregation, to research the history of their own school, compare it to what they have learned about the Virginia schools, and write from the perspective of someone who lived during those times.

Charles S. White, a Professor of Education at Boston University, introduces Teaching with Historic Places to his classes of aspiring teachers. “We want children to be active in their learning,” he says. “We want them to construct their knowledge of history. One way to get them to do that is to get them to ‘do history’ the way that historians do, the way that we try to have kids ‘do science’ in the classroom the way that scientists do. Teaching with Historic Places allows us to do that.”

All 100 Teaching with Historic Places lesson plans are available on the National Park Service website at [www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp).

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